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R E P O R T

ON THE

PHYSICAL CONDITION

OF THE

RHODE ISLAND REGIMENTS,

NOW IN THE FIELD, IN VIRGINIA AND IN THE VICINITY OF
WASHINGTON, D. C.

ALSO ON THE

CONDITION OF THE HOSPITALS

IN AND AROUND WASHINGTON :

MADE TO HIS EXCELLENCY GOVERNOR SPRAGUE,

AND

PRESENTED TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

Of Rhode Island,

JANUARY SESSION, A. D. 1863,

BY LLOYD MORTON, M. D.,
COMMISSIONER.

P R O V I D E N C E :

ALFRED ANTHONY, PRINTER TO THE STATE.
1863.

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Dec 5 1862

State of Rhode Island, &c.

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE, }
PROVIDENCE, Dec. 1862. }

INSTRUCTIONS

TO THE

COMMISSION APPOINTED TO VISIT THE INVALIDS
AND WOUNDED SOLDIERS.

Dr. Lloyd Morton, (who will associate with him, Mrs. Albert Dailey,) is hereby appointed a Commission to proceed to Washington, on a tour of inspection, having in view the welfare of the sick and wounded soldiers in hospital or otherwise, belonging to Rhode Island Regiments.

The Commission will be charged with the following duties:—

1st. To procure from the Secretary of war, an order for the removal of sick and wounded Rhode Island soldiers to the United States Hospital at Portsmouth Grove,—similar to that given to Assistant Surgeon James Harris, dated July 5th, 1862, and directing the transfer of invalid and wounded soldiers to Providence.

2d. To visit the United States Hospitals in and around the city of Washington, and especially that in Alexandria, and wherever else Rhode Island soldiers may be situated, with the particular object of finding out their condition. The Commission will extend its investigation to all regiments in the field, (as far as practicable,) and make

a report of each case to this Department, to be presented to the Legislature at its coming Session.

3d. The Commission is particularly charged with the transfer to the hospital at Portsmouth Grove, of all wounded and invalid soldiers belonging to Rhode Island regiments, from the different hospitals as above directed ; and is ordered to perform this duty with the greatest care, having in view the comfort and welfare of the disabled.

4th. To procure the discharge of every soldier found to be unfit for farther service ; and, also, to cause the removal to said hospital, of all those cases where health can be better restored within the State, and whose services will become sooner available to the government.

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS TO DR. MORTON.

Before entering upon your tour of medical and hospital duty, (concerning which you have been otherwise instructed,) except incidentally, or, as it may lay in your route, to which these instructions carry you, you will proceed with all possible diligence and dispatch to Acquia Creek, on the Potomac River, and having obtained permission of General Burnside to enter his lines, you will at once do so, and will lose no time in visiting the 2d, 4th and 7th Regiments R. I. Infantry, and the several Batteries of the 1st R. I. Artillery, now comprising a portion of the "Army of the Potomac," and consisting of Batteries A, B, C, D, E, G and H ; and also the 1st Regiment R. I. Cavalry, also comprising a portion of said army.

On reaching these regiments and batteries you will ascertain, by personal inspection and careful inquiry, of privates as well as officers, what their present condition is, with reference to clothing and hospital stores ; whether the men have shoes, caps, shirts, drawers, coats or jackets, pants, blouses or over-coats, suitable for winter use, in the climate of Virginia ; what number are without either of these necessary articles ; how long they have been without them ; how recently others have been supplied with them ; and, especially, whether suffering has resulted, or is now resulting to Rhode Island soldiers, in consequence of neglect to furnish them with any of these articles. Should you find that such suffering has existed or does now exist, you will ascertain whether it is or was attributable in any degree, to the neglect of any officer of either of these regiments or batteries to make requisitions for supplies, or to make proper representations of the condition of their men to brigade or other superior officers, and communicate the name of any such Rhode Island officer in your report to me.

You will also inform yourself as to hospital stores which should belong to each regiment and battery, and the usual course taken in caring for the sick and wounded soldiers.

You will also ascertain whether the men comprising these regiments and batteries, or any portion of them, have suffered or are now suffering for want of *wholesome* food; whether they have been obliged to subsist upon less than half rations, and if so, for how long a time, and under what circumstances.

You will also ascertain, by inquiry of the proper officers, whether our soldiers are promptly paid by the Government as required by its regulations, and, if not, when they were last paid, to what time, and how long they may have had to serve at any time without payment.

Having obtained this information, and made careful memoranda of the same, you will communicate the same to this Department with all possible dispatch, and then enter upon the duties of your commission.

By order of the

Commander-in-Chief.

(Signed)

EDWARD C. MAURAN,

Adjutant General.

REPORT

OF THE

PHYSICAL CONDITION OF THE RHODE ISLAND REGIMENTS,

NOW IN THE FIELD, IN VIRGINIA AND IN THE VICINITY
OF WASHINGTON, &c.

Agreeable to instructions received from the Adjutant General's office, dated December, 1862, and marked, "*additional instructions*," after my arrival in Washington, I proceeded to Falmouth, Va., to visit the several regiments of infantry, cavalry and artillery, raised and recruited in Rhode Island, and at once commenced the investigations as suggested in those additional instructions.

On the night of my arrival at Falmouth, (the 18th of December, 1862,) I visited the 7th Regiment, R. I. V., which I found encamped near Falmouth, in General Sumner's Division. The regiment had suffered severely at the battle of Fredericksburg, and as the list of the killed, wounded and missing of this regiment had been forwarded to the office of the Adjutant General of the State of Rhode Island, I did not deem it proper to send another list, but at once commenced to ascertain the physical condition of the regiment.

Between five and six hundred men reported for duty, on that day. I could not ascertain the exact number, as the regiment was going out on picket duty that night, and everything was in a state of confusion.

The regiment had not been paid off since leaving Rhode Island, though the muster and pay rolls had been sent in on the last of October.

The men were very well supplied with the necessary clothing for a campaign in Virginia, during the winter season, with the exception of pantaloons and shoes, both of which were needed to some extent, not because correct requisitions had not been sent to the proper authorities, and the articles sent for issued to the regiment, but in consequence of the quality of the articles themselves. A pair of shoes will not last more than four or five days on a march, and the pantaloons wear out in a very short time. The difference in the appearance of different men was very marked—some looked neat and tidy, while others were in a shabby condition, which must be attributed to the character of the men themselves, rather than to the issue of clothing.

The rations were good and in sufficient quantity, and perhaps in as great a variety as the circumstances of the case would admit of. The men subsisted on half rations only on a march.

The hospital department of this regiment was in as good a condition as it was possible for it to be, in the field, and immediately subsequent to an engagement. There was, however, a lack of medical officers, Dr. Harris being entirely alone. Assistant Surgeon Sprague was absent on furlough, sick, and Assistant Surgeon Gaylord was also absent on furlough, and had sent in his resignation. There was no difficulty experienced in obtaining the necessary medicines and hospital supplies.

On Dec. 19th, I visited the 12th Regiment, R. I. V., which I found in the same brigade with the 7th, and encamped near by. This regiment had suffered severely in battle, and had sent to Rhode Island a list of their killed, wounded and missing. Eight hundred and ten (810) men reported for duty that day, and I was informed the number was increasing daily, as those missing were continually coming in. The loss of this regiment will not be so great as at first supposed.

This regiment had not been paid off since mustered into the service of the United States.

The men were in very good condition as to clothing, with the exception of blankets, a great number of which had been lost or left upon the late battle-field. Requisitions for blankets have been sent forward.

The rations issued to this regiment were good and in sufficient quantity.

The hospital department was deficient in almost every article, and had been in that condition since leaving their camps near Washington. Still, I could not learn it could be attributed to the neglect of any

officer of the regiment. Dr. Carpenter was alone in charge of this department, Assistant Surgeons King and Hutchinson having been detailed to serve in the general hospital extemporized after the battle.

On the same day, (the 19th of December,) I visited the 2d Regiment, R. I. V., in Franklin's Division. A list of their loss in battle had been sent to Rhode Island. Four hundred and eighty-one (481) men reported for duty that day.

This regiment had recently been paid off, for a period of four months. A very little of their pay had been sent home, as most of the men had purchased boots of the sutlers at \$10 per pair.

The article of clothing most complained of, was that of shoes. No difficulty was experienced in obtaining them, but they were worthless when received, and, besides, would not fit. Most of the sizes sent were sevens and eights, while the sizes most needed were fives, sixes, elevens twelves and thirteens. The men suffered severely for want of clothing while encamped at Downing's Hill, Oct. 21st.

The rations issued to this regiment were good and in sufficient quantity.

The hospital department was in very good condition, and there was but very little sickness among the men, attributed by the Surgeon, Dr. Carr, to the fact that the regiment had been sifted completely of its worthless material.

Upon the whole, this regiment was in very good condition, and appeared equal to any I saw.

One great complaint was made of the loss of recruits. A very large percentage of the recruits sent to the regiment, deserted before arriving at the camp.

On the following day (20th Dec.) I saw the 4th Reg. R. I. V., which was encamped a short distance from the 2d, in Sumner's Division. The number of their loss in battle had been sent to Rhode Island. Four hundred and forty-eight (448) men reported for duty on that day.

This regiment had not been paid since July last. The muster and pay rolls for August and September had not been sent in, because the blank rolls could not be obtained.

Clothing was being issued to the men on the day I visited them, and by the following day, all the men would be well clothed.

The rations issued this regiment have been good and in abundance.

The hospital department was in very good condition. The only difficulty at any time in procuring hospital supplies, was lack of transportation.

On the same day (20th of Dec.) I endeavored to visit the batteries, but found them so situated and stationed along the bank of the Rappahannock, guarding the passage of that river, it was impossible for me to visit them personally. I, however, obtained the following information from Col. Tompkins, who very kindly offered me every facility possible, in the prosecution of my object.

BATTERY A.

On the 31st of December, four months' pay will be due this battery. The muster and pay rolls have been sent in. The only excuse the paymaster gives for not paying the men, is want of means.

Within the past fortnight the men of this battery have been supplied with clothing throughout.

BATTERY B.

The men of this battery have served the same length of time without pay, as Battery A, and for the same reason. Clothing also issued to the men on the same day with the men of Battery A.

BATTERY C.

The men of this battery have not been paid off since the 30th of June last, for what reason I am unable to say. They are well supplied with clothing, with a few exceptions, and on their return to camp the articles they require will be issued to them.

BATTERY D.

The men belonging to this battery have been paid up to 31st of October. The men are in need of a few articles of clothing, requisitions for which are being made, but Capt. Buckley not having assumed the command of this battery until within a day or two previous to the battle of Fredericksburg, probably accounts for the delay in not furnishing the men with necessary clothing.

BATTERY E.

The men of this battery were paid off one day before the battle, and were supplied with clothing on the 18th of Dec.

BATTERY G.

The men of this battery have not been paid for four months, the reasons for which I am unable to give. The men have been newly clothed within a fortnight.

To the artillery regiment there is at present no medical officers. Dr. Thurston has been detailed for hospital duty at Frederick city, Md., and the assistant surgeon Dr. Merrill, has been detained in Washington by order of the Surgeon General, who says there is no record of his appointment in the Adjutant General's office at Washington. Col. Tompkins, however, says his name was forwarded to the Adjutant General's office on the last muster roll, (Oct. 31st, 1862.)

The men in this (artillery) regiment need socks and mittens, otherwise they have obtained from the government all of the clothing they are entitled to, and a great quantity besides.

The men subsisted on half rations on their march from Harper's Ferry. Since which time the rations issued are good and in sufficient quantity.

On the 20th and 21st of December, I visited the first regiment of R. I. Cavalry. This regiment was encamped near Potomac creek, about half way between Acquia Creek landing and Falmouth, Va. It composed part of a brigade of cavalry under the command of Brig. General Averill.

Five hundred and one (501) men reported for duty on the first day I was with the regiment. Of this number one hundred and fifty (150) were dismounted men, and the regiment is put off from day to day, with promises of a supply of horses which are not forthcoming. However, of these 150 dismounted men, fifty (50) are new recruits, and fifty (50) are exchanged paroled prisoners.

This regiment has not been paid off for six months. The muster and pay rolls have been promptly sent forward. Since the regiment was brigaded, the brigade commissary has received orders not to trust any officer for his necessary subsistence, which certainly is a great hardship for the officers.

The rations issued to the men are good and in sufficient quantity. On a march, half rations as a general thing, are issued to the men. After General Pope's return to Washington, the men suffered for lack of subsistence, being obliged to subsist on the devastated country through which they marched.

Clothing is issued to this regiment in sufficient quantity, but great complaint is made of the quality of the articles. Boots have just been issued to the men, but they are worth but little, fifteen days' service wearing them out.

Great trouble is experienced in this regiment in procuring the neces-

sary supplies. After sending forward proper requisitions for the articles needed, delay after delay takes place, and when finally the articles arrive, they are almost worthless ; this whole trouble has arisen since the regiment was attached to a brigade. No trouble was experienced in any of these matters when the regiment acted independently.

A great deal of fault is found with the recruits sent to this regiment. A greater part of these are afflicted with some physical disability, which renders them unfit for service, and I know of no one to whom this fault should be attributed, but the medical examiner in Providence, R. I., whoever he may be.

The men of the regiment looked neat and tidy, and I heard they had learned to take proper care of themselves.

This includes all of the regiments and batteries from Rhode Island, which are at present with General Burnside's army.

Upon my visit to these several regiments and batteries, I was particularly struck with the contrast between those who had been in the field a long time, and those recently recruited and sent forward. The men who had been in service the longest, certainly looked the best ; their clothing was in better condition, and their whole appearance showed a careful attention to personal cleanliness, and attention to the preservation of every article properly belonging to them, as well as those articles entrusted to their care, and upon the preservation of which depends their efficiency as soldiers.

I don't know as I could suggest but one or two matters which might be brought to the attention of the State of Rhode Island, or to benevolent individuals of that State, which might inure to the comfort and health of our troops, and promote their efficiency in the field.

If some way could be devised to send to the Rhode Island regiments, vegetables, (for instance, potatoes, onions, apples, green or dried,) I think the health of our troops would be benefitted. Again, the articles of which they all stand in need, are socks and mittens, both of which could easily be furnished from Rhode Island.

Incidentally, in visiting the hospitals in Washington and vicinity, I was within a short distance of Battery H., and the 11th R. I. V. of infantry, and consequently visited them.

I visited Battery H. on the 23d of December. It is encamped on the Bladensburg road, a little East of the Capitol. It composes a part of a camp of instruction for artillery.

This battery is in fine condition with one exception. It is in great need of men. Twenty-nine men deserted within three days after reaching Washington. Not one man, however, was a resident of

Rhode Island. The remaining men went for nothing, and could the required number of men be furnished to fill up this battery, it would be a very effective one.

On December 25th, I visited the 11th regiment R. I. V., now encamped on Miner's Hill in Virginia.

On that day, eight hundred and fifty-four privates and non-commissioned officers reported for duty.

This regiment has not been paid off since leaving Rhode Island, though the muster rolls were promptly sent in on the last of October. No reason could be assigned for non-payment, excepting the shortness of time at which they would be paid at that date.

Rations are good and in sufficient quantity.

The men were all well clothed and generally in good condition, and were industriously building log huts for their Winter quarters.

The hospital department of this regiment is in a very good condition. The Surgeon has taken a wooden building near by, and fitted it up very comfortably for the sick of the regiment. In the hospital there are two or three patients who should be discharged, and at my suggestion the proper papers are being made out.

The Surgeon of this regiment and the patients in hospitals, seemed to have a dread of a general hospital, and consequently there are a number in the regimental hospital who should be immediately sent to some general hospital, where there are facilities for taking better care of the men.

I personally made suggestions to have the men removed to some general hospital, and I doubt not it will be done.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

DR. LLOYD MORTON,

Commissioner.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 28th, 1862.

REPORT OF THE STATE COMMISSIONER.

To His Excellency the Governor.

The instructions received by me from the Adjutant General's office, dated Dec. 1862, contemplate two reports. The first, of the physical condition of our regiments actually in the field; the other, of the condition of the hospitals in and around Washington, with a statement of what was actually effected with reference to the removal of the sick and wounded soldiers belonging to the regiments raised and recruited by the State of Rhode Island.

The first report, dated Washington, D. C., December 28th, 1862, has already been forwarded to your Excellency, and some of the suggestions therein contained are now being carried out. Yet, upon reflection, it is deemed the better way to give in this document a brief statement of my proceedings, in the pursuit of the objects contemplated in the mission entrusted to me; thus combining a portion of the former report with my views of the present management of the hospitals and the treatment of our sick, wounded and invalid soldiers.

On the evening of the 16th of December, 1862, I left Providence and arrived at Falmouth, Va., on the 18th of the same month, and within a few days visited successively the following regiments of R. I. soldiers, then attached to the army of the Potomac, viz: 7th, 12th, 2d and 4th regiments of infantry, a portion of the first regiment of light-artillery, comprising Batteries A, B, C, D, E, and G, and the first regiment of cavalry.

By conversation with the men as well as the officers, it seemed to me, a very fair opinion of their circumstances at that time, was arrived at. It was impracticable to visit the men of the batteries, as they

were then on duty guarding the passage of the Rappahannock river, and all information obtained with reference to this regiment was kindly furnished me by Col. Tompkins.

The condition of our soldiers then at Falmouth, as a general thing, was as good as the circumstances of the case would admit of, just recovering as they were, from the depression consequent upon the recent battle.

More complaint was made of the quality of the articles furnished by Government, than of the quantity. As regards clothing, the one article of pants received the most censure, still much of *all* the clothing is made of such poor material that a few days' wear render it nearly worthless. Shoes of such inferior quality, that in a short march they become useless and must be thrown aside.

The rations at that time were of good quality, the variety was not very great, yet, upon the whole, but little fault was found with the food. Whenever supplies are not forthcoming, it seems to me, the fault cannot be attributed to the officers in command of the regiments, nor to the Department at Washington, but in some way to intermediate officers, (brigade or divisional). The Cavalry regiment, in particular, had no difficulty in procuring whatever was needed, when it acted independently, but since it has been brigaded, a great deal of trouble is experienced in obtaining necessary supplies.

The recruits sent to our regiments are many of them worthless, and, it seems to me, a more careful inspection is necessary before they are accepted and mustered into the service. I have yet to learn of what earthly use an unsound man is in the military service of the United States Government. He is not only a useless expense to the State and general Government, but an actual burden to the regiment to which he belongs—embarrassing its movements and requiring a detail of able-bodied men to take care of him.

I would recommend in this connection (as I have before done personally) a request be sent by your Excellency, to the Surgeons in charge of Medical Department of our regiments, to use their best endeavors to procure the discharge of those men who are, and will be of no use to the government, and if any men are sick in their regimental hospitals who will not be fit for duty within a very short time, to have them sent to some general hospital.

The suggestion made in my former report, to furnish our troops with fresh vegetables, is now, I understand, being carried out. I deem this matter of the utmost importance, and hope, as soon as this

supplies consumed, another cargo may be forwarded, and thus be continued, so long as a single Rhode Island soldier is in the military service of the United States.

A grave cause of complaint exists with reference to the prompt payment of our soldiers. The commanding officers of our regiments have sent in their muster and pay rolls promptly, with perhaps one or two exceptions, and the reason given by the paymaster is, that he has no money in his hands to pay the men.

Nothing discourages and disheartens a soldier so much as to be deprived of his well earned pay, month after month. In some regiments which have not been paid for six months, it is a great hardship to the officers, who are obliged to pay the Brigade Commissary cash for articles necessary for their subsistence.

Upon my return to Washington, it came directly in my way while visiting the hospitals, to see Battery H, and the 11th regiment of infantry.

The same general suggestions apply equally to these commands, as to the regiments above specified.

For more minute particulars I refer you to my former report, dated Washington, D. C., Dec. 28, 1862.

To the officers in command of our regiments I am indebted for great kindness and courtesy, particularly to Cols. Bliss, Viall, Tompkins and Duffie. Col. Bliss needs no commendation from me, the laurels, won at the battle of Fredericksburg, speak sufficiently in his praise. Cols. Viall and Tompkins afforded me every facility in the prosecution of my object, and from my short intercourse with them, I judge them to be splendid officers, and I doubt not will do the State great credit.

Last, though by no means least, is Col. Duffie. I made the acquaintance of this officer last summer, at Manassas, and was most happy to renew it.

No one, seeing the efficiency to which he has brought our regiment of cavalry, can for an instant doubt the military skill and ability of this frank and generous soldier.

On Dec. 23d, 1862, I procured an order from the Surgeon General, with reference to the transfer of our wounded soldiers from the hospitals at Washington, to the hospital at Portsmouth Grove, a copy of which is herewith enclosed. Upon perusal of this copy, you will perceive, it does not include the sick in hospitals previous to the battle of Fredericksburg. I at once obtained an interview with the Secretary of War, and used my best endeavors to have the order extended, so as

to include all our sick, wounded and invalid soldiers, as contemplated in my instructions, but was informed by Mr. Stanton, the order was peremptory, and for the present could include none other than those wounded at the battle of Fredericksburg; and furthermore, this order had received his hearty sanction, as well as that of the Commander-in-Chief.

Upon visiting the hospitals, it was ascertained a large proportion of our sick had been transferred to hospitals in Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York, previous to the late battle, and what few remained, (always excepting the convalescents,) were too ill to be removed. Seventy-seven (77) from those wounded at Fredericksburg, in company with others, mostly from New England, sufficient to make the number two hundred and seventy-nine, were carefully and tenderly embarked on board the Hospital Transport steamer Daniel Webster, and left Alexandria, on the evening of the second (2d) of January, 1863, for Portsmouth Grove, where they arrived on the evening of the 5th of the same month.

I came a passenger on board the steamer, and here cheerfully add my testimony, to the assiduous attentions given the wounded and sick, by all the officers on board, particularly Dr. Hudson, the surgeon in charge, and Dr. Tegs, his assistant, than whom I have rarely met more intelligent and kind hearted surgeons.

A list of these seventy-seven (77) Rhode Islanders, has already been forwarded to the Adjutant General's office. If any wounded have been left behind in Washington, who should have been included in the list of those brought to Rhode Island, it must be attributed to the great difficulty in collecting men from so many hospitals, (over 60 in number, I think,) and to the necessary hurry of departure. In my tour of hospital duty, I visited and inspected to the best of my ability, twenty-one (21) hospitals, besides the convalescent camps, and the camps of distribution at Alexandria.

A list of the Rhode Island patients in these hospitals, with the names of their diseases, and the situation of their wounds, is now in the Adjutant General's office. Had not the steamer containing our wounded, left so soon, I should immediately have visited all the hospitals in Washington. But as it is, I think a sufficient number have been seen, to form a comparatively fair opinion of their general management.

All our sick and wounded with whom I conversed, expressed themselves well satisfied with their treatment, and spoke in the highest terms of the medical officers, with only a few exceptions. When we consid-

er the magnitude of the work, (twenty thousand or more inmates of the hospitals in Washington alone,) is it strange some complaint will be made?

The cooking arrangements connected with the hospitals, are in good condition, the food abundant and of the proper quality.

Excepting the Patent Office Hospital, I think the sanitary condition of every one of these institutions is very good and daily improving. That portion of the Patent Office, now used for a hospital, is damp, cold and unhealthy. In all probability, the patients will soon be removed to a healthier location, and, I trust, the use of that building for hospital purposes, will for the future be dispensed with.

The camp at Alexandria, known as the Convalescent and Stragglers' Camp, has recently been divided. The convalescents have been removed to a separate camp nearer Washington, and the name of the original camp changed. It is now known as the Camp of Distribution, where all soldiers discharged from hospitals, or taken up as stragglers, and fit for duty, are sent to await the call of their respective corps commanders.

The Convalescent Camp I do not think much of, not that anything wrong in its management came under my observation, but the *principle* is wrong. If a soldier, discharged from the hospital, is able to sleep on the ground under a common tent and cook his own rations, he is certainly able to join his regiment and enter upon active duty. If he is not able to join his comrades in the field, he should remain in a hospital, where he may be properly administered to and cared for, until he has regained perfect health.

The registration of the inmates of hospitals is very imperfect. On the list at the office of the Medical Director, consolidated from the morning reports of each hospital, are registered what purports to be the names of men from the sixth, (6th) eighth, (8th) ninth, (9th) and tenth, (10th) R. I. Regiments. If I am correctly informed, we never had regiments in the field, numbered respectively, six (6) and eight (8).

The ninth (9th) and tenth (10th) regiments were mustered out of service by September last, and there can be no men from these regiments in hospital. Again, names are registered from our third (3d) and fifth (5th) regiments. I doubt very much whether any sick from either of these regiments have been brought from Port Royal, S. C., or from Newbern, N. C., to be admitted into hospitals at Washington.

This imperfect registration was a great disappointment to me ; my intention was to obtain a correct list of our soldiers in every hospital, for publication in some of our daily papers ; and as I had not time to visit all the hospitals, it occurred to me to make use of the Medical Director's list. The list at the office of the Sanitary Commission is but little better—names from the twenty first (21st) R. I. Regiment are there recorded. Accordingly I made arrangements with Prof. Jillson, of the R. I. Relief Association, to forward to the Adjutant General's Office, a list which is being made out under the auspices of that Association, compiled from the reports of their Visiting Committee.

If the State of Rhode Island would make some arrangements with the above named Relief Association, by way of compensation, it seems to me a correct list of Rhode Island soldiers in hospitals could be weekly received, and published for the information of those who have friends and relations in our regiments, and are often at a loss to learn their whereabouts. This is a matter which properly belongs to the State, and should not be left to be accomplished entirely by the voluntary contributions of the benevolent.

The policy of transferring the sick and wounded from Washington to their respective States is, in my opinion, a doubtful one. Could it be demonstrated that the sick would be better cared for in a United States Hospital established in Rhode Island, in Connecticut or in Vermont, (and I believe the transfer is in no case allowed unless the United States have a general hospital within the State,) it would be a wise movement. But I believe the contrary is the fact. At this season of the year, especially, I think our sick are much better off in a climate like that of Washington, than they would be here. A very large majority of the patients are better cared for there than they would be at their own homes.

This transfer works to the peculiar disadvantage of one class of patients, viz. : those who have suffered amputation of the leg or thigh. At St. Elizabeth's Hospital, the Government has established the inventor of one of the most perfect artificial limbs, who is constantly employed (at the expense of the United States,) in fitting limbs upon those soldiers who have sufficiently recovered from an amputation. Why, then, should this class of patients be deprived of this benefit by being removed, and in all probability discharged from the service, in some hospital remote from Washington ?

In the history of this war, thus far, there has been, in my opinion,

no battle where the arrangements for taking care of the wounded men, was so well planned, and so faithfully executed, as at the battle of Fredericksburg.

LLOYD MORTON, M. D.,
Commissioner.

PAWTUCKET, R. I., Jan. 14th, 1863.

[COPY.]

SURGEON GENERAL'S OFFICE,
WASHINGTON CITY, D. C.,
Dec. 23d, 1862.

SIR :

You are requested to select four hundred and fifty (450) soldiers of Rhode Island, wounded in the battle at Fredericksburg, and forward them to Portsmouth Grove, R. I., provided, you have not already filled up that hospital.

Very respectfully

Your obedient servant,

By order of the Surgeon General,

(Signed)

JOS. R. SMITH,
Surgeon U. S. Army.

Surg. R. O. ABBOTT, U. S. A.

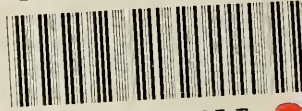
*Assistant Medical Director,
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